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ABSTRACT

Research on gender stereotypes has contrasted males with females, describing males by competency traits and females by traits which denote warmth or emotionality. However, it has become clear that these traits do not satisfactorily describe all members of either sex, since not all men possess only masculine characteristics and not all women exhibit only feminine characteristics. To determine if there are within-sex categories of males, 200 college students (100 male; 100 female) rated the traits and behaviors of three types of males: family man, businessman, and macho man. Subjects rated the items for how they described one particular kind of male or all males in general. Results indicated that, although subjects did systematically rate traits and behaviors as being characteristic of separate categories of males, a few characteristics were considered to be equally descriptive of all males. It seems that both males and females discriminate at least three distinct role categories among males. These findings, when compared with previous work on female categories, suggest a remarkable similarity between the female and male categories, and reveal parallel categories which cross sex lines. (KGB)

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Male Categories: Are All Men "Masculine?"

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Purpose

The traditional research on gender stereotypes (eg. Broverman, Vogel, Broverman, Clarkson, & Rosenkrantz, 1972) has contrasted males with females emphasizing differences between the sexes. That research has shown that males are described by a cluster of competency traits such as independent, objective, active, logical, and adventurous. In contrast females are described by a cluster of traits which denote warmth or emotionality. These traits include gentle, sensitive to other's feelings, tactful, and religious. The two lists of stereotypic traits have been replicated in many studies. The trait lists have been labeled as masculine and feminine respectively and are commonly used to characterize the two sexes. In sum, the past literature on gender stereotypes has emphasized the differences between the sexes.

Recently however, it has become clear that these traits do not satisfactorily describe all members of either sex since not all men possess only masculine characteristics and not all women exhibit only feminine characteristics (Bem, 1974; Deaux, 1984; Spence & Helmreich,

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1980). Deaux (1984) investigated the relative nature of gender characteristics. She asked her subjects to estimate the probability that the average man or woman has a particular trait. The interesting point about her findings is that while subjects gave the expected high probability judgments about stereotypic traits for each sex, they also gave high probability ratings for the same trait for the opposite sex. For example, her subjects said there is a .82 probability that a male would be competitive, but they also said that there is a .64 probability that a female would be competitive. The same pattern was true for feminine traits. For example, subjects gave a .77 probability that a female would be warm and a .66 probability that a male would be warm. Deaux (1984) concludes that the trait descriptions cannot be ascribed to either males or females, but instead may be a matter of degree for both sexes.

If there are personality differences within the sexes such that a wide variety of traits can be expressed by both males and females, two questions arise. First, do the characteristics vary systematically within the sexes so that distinct subgroups of males and females occur? The second question which arises is do we have the cognitive systems to distinguish between the different kinds of men and women.

In answer to the first question about distinct subgroups, research findings support the idea that there are different categories of both males and females. When strategies are used which require subjects to discriminate within-sex variations rather than between-sex differences, within-sex variations are shown and are sufficiently strong to indicate subtypes or subcategories of males and females (Ashomre, 1981; Hamilton, 1981; Taylor, 1981). For example, in one study, subjects differentiated two subtypes of men, a self-controlled

type and a more reactive type. The self-controlled male was described by traits such as conservative, formal, and unemotional, and the reactive type was described by traits such as vain, reckless, mischievous, and loud (Ashmore, 1981). In the same studies, females also were described as including two different types. One type was described as poised, idealistic, cautious, and tactful while the other type was described as weak, excitable, temperamental, nervous, and confused. In other research, Clifton, McGrath and Wick (1976) found indications that subjects would reliably categorize traits as appropriate for three different role categories of women, the housewife, bunny, and the professional woman. The housewife category parallels the female category in traditional literature and is kind and warm. The bunny is a sex object and is glamorous and frivolous. The professional woman is the career woman who is confident and competitive. The trait descriptions which resulted in both research projects described above show a wide range of within-sex variation in personal characteristics. The evidence indicates that a unitary desciption of males and females may not be accurate. Our strategies which compare males to females may have obscured important information about within-sex differences.

The second question which must be addressed concerns the cognitive processing of person information. The cognitive systems involved with maintaining and using information about different types persons must be clearly described. It appears that categorization processes are important in processing social information. Evidence suggests that we do tend to categorize people along many dimensions (e.g. race, age, occupation). One such dimension is sex, and researchers have examined effects of male as compared to female

categories (Taylor and Fiske, 1978; Taylor, Fiske, Etcoff, and Ruderman, 1978). However, England and Hyland (1984) demonstrated that not only do we categorize females as female but also as a particular subcategory of female; the housewife, the bunny sex object, and the professional woman. Further, their research showed that the categorization of females into subcategories influences memory for the females' behavior. Such research findings indicate that there is an important connection between how social information is structured and the use of that information in various cognitive activities.

While prior research has demonstrated the existence of within-sex categories of females there is no clear indication that there are within-sex categories of males. Our intuitions suggest that there are different kinds of men also, and it follows that subjects should discriminate between the different kinds of men. On the other hand, some of the literature suggests that males may be a different case. The sex-typing studies suggest that there are stronger sanctions against boys who deviate from culturally specified norms than there are for females who deviate (e.g. Huston, 1983). Cultural demands do not lessen when males reach adulthood. There are strong requirements for adult males to be masculine. That is, adult males are expected to be competitive, aggressive, independent, self-reliant, and untiringly sexual (e.g. Doyle, 1983). Therefore, it may be that since there is more social pressure to conform to cultural standards, males may be quite similar to each other without a great amount of within-sex variation. We did a series of studies to determine whether or not subjects would distinguish between kinds of males and if they did, to explore the nature and content of those role categories.

Method

In preliminary studies we asked subjects to think of all the males they knew, to put them into categories, and to generate traits and behaviors associated with the men in each category. In those studies subjects generated trait and behavior descriptions of six types of males: the family man, the businessman, the playboy, the jock, good time Charlie, an immature sort of person, and the macho male. In that study there was a large amount of overlap in the descriptions of the last four kinds of males. Many of the traits and behaviors which subjects rated as appropriate for one of the four categories were rated by different subjects as appropriate for one, two, or three of the other categories also. The present study emphasized discrete categories and required subjects to contrast the characterisics associated with their own categories. One hundred male and 100 female college students read the following brief descriptions of the three types of males.

> Family Man typical 30 years old
> This man is married and lives in a house with a backyard. He has three kids, a dog, and is devoted to his life.
>
> Businessman typical 30 years old
> This man is a thorough professional; he is the work oriented achiever.
>
> Macho typical 30 years old
> This kind of male takes great pride in being a man. His image of what is masculine governs his life.

The subjects rated the items in their booklet as to whether they described one particular kind of male or all males in general. Each subject rated only traits or behaviors. Items that were rated by at least 50% of the subjects as being characteristic of a category were considered to be representative of the category.

Results and Discussion

The results indicate that subjects did systematically rate traits and behaviors as being characteristic of separate categories of males, the family man, the businesman, and the macho male (See Table 1). A few characteristics were considered to be equally descriptive of all males. It seems that both males and females discriminate at least three distinct role categories among males. There are several important implications to be drawn from these findings. First, people do not expect all males to possess the traditional masculine traits (eg. independent, objective, active, logical, etc.) Only one category of male, the businessman, was found to possess those traits.

Second, these findings have serious implications for how we conceptualize similarities and differences between the sexes. When we compare this work with our previous work on female categories, we find a remarkable similarity between the female and male categories. There are parallel categories which cross sex lines. For example, two cross-sex categories which are remarkably similar are the housewife and the family man. Some of the traits which describe both the housewife and the family man are loyal, understanding, sensitive, and kind. The dimension they have in common seems to be expressivity, which in the sex-role literature has often been considered synonymous with femininity (Spence & Helmreich, 1980). Our subjects, however, believe that in addition to females there are also males for whom expressivity is a core of their personality. Other parallel categories crossed sex lines for instrumentality. In the literature instrumentality is usually considered to reflect masculinity. In this study the professional woman is very much like the businessman. Some of the traits for both the male and female versions of this category

are competitive, logical, organized, and assertive.

A third class of male and female categories appeared in our experiments. The bunny and macho male categories do not relate to the traditional literature in a straightforward way. These two categories seem to have a common dimension relating to sexuality, but further within-sex research is needed to examine the specific characteristics of this category.

These findings are important in two different areas of research. First, Spence and Helmreich (1980) have recently reviewed the literature on the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) (Bem, 1974) and the Personal Attributes Questionnaire (PAQ) (Spence and Helmreich, 1978) and have called for a re-examination of the current conceptualization of masculinity and femininity. Our research suggests a direction in which to look. The data indicate that instrumentality and expressivity may be salient personality dimensions for categorizing males and females. However, we suggest that sex-role researchers begin examining within-sex variation in these characteristics as well as global between-sex differences. For example, both the Spence and Helmreich and Bem models allow for categories of cross-sex typed individuals, but little attention has been directed at instrumental females or expressive males. By continuing to associate expressivity with femininity and females, and instrumentality with masculinity and males, sex-role researchers are most likely to identify existing gender differences but are likely overlook gender similarities in these characteristics.

Second, researchers investigating stereotypes have begun to consider between sex similarities. Taylor (1981) has suggested that characteristics between the sexes overlap and that a given

characteristic may not be exlusively descriptive of either sex (Taylor, 1981). The pushy broad and the bitch are different kinds of women both of whom have an aggressive component to their personalities. These types of women illustrate that women can be aggressive even though the traditional appoach to gender differences specifies that aggression is a male characteristic. T findings are also consistent with the work of Deaux (1984) described earlier.

A final issue must be addressed. In the traditional approach to studying gender it is a robust finding that subjects will rate males as independent, logical, etc. and females as gentle, sensitive, etc. The question is how are those reliable and consistent, sex-related findings to be understood in view of the present results.

Methodology plays a part in the differences in the two sets of results. In traditional research subjects are asked to compare males to females (eg. Broverman et al, 1972). That approach emphasizes sex differences, and subjects comply by giving a unified description of each sex. In other types of studies these between-sex differences are not so readily apparent, for example, in free description techniques (Sharp, Candy, & Troll, 1980). In the present study, the question asked was about within-sex differences, and subjects responded by giving the characteristics which distinguish among members of the same sex.

After taking methodology into consideration, one problem still remains. The findings reported in traditional research are consistent across different subjects in different situations and in different studies. The same group of characteristics are used by subjects to describe each of the sexes. That is, in trait studies subjects produce the same cluster of instrumental traits to describe males and

the same group of expressive traits to describe females. In contrast, this study produced three categories of males and we have described three categories of females elsewhere, and each category is described by a different set of traits. Comparing the content of the present studies with the content of traditional studies, it is primarily the businessman and the housewife who are described in traditional research. On the whole, the competency cluster of traits describe the businessman, and the expressive cluster of traits describe the housewife.

There are two possible explanations for these reliable findings in the traditional approach. Both explanations suggest that when subjects are asked to describe males verses females, they cannot comply with a unitary description for such diverse kinds of people. Subjects may resolve the problem by describing the most representative type for each sex. In that case the businessman and the housewife may be the most salient examples of males and females.

A second possibility may be that the subjects respond by giving the cultural stereotypes. A cultural stereotypic response may contrast strongly with responses which describe actual behavior. Emmerich (1973) has discussed these two aspects as the normative and the descriptive aspects of gender. The normative includes the prescriptive and proscriptive cultural pressures. For example, our culture expects that males will be competitve and will not cry (Doyle, 1983). The descriptive aspects refer to the personal characteristics that males actually develop in response to their own internal dispositions and their life situations (Emmerich, 1973; Turner, 1982). For example, if we consider the males we know personally, it is likely that we know several males who are not competitive.

Separating these two factors, the stereotypic cultural expectations from descriptive social information, will enable researchers to take a clearer look at within-sex and between-sex differences. Such close examination will be informative about how social information is structured and opens the way to study how that information, both normative and descriptive, is processed.

Table 1

Ratings for Ten Highest Ranking Traits and Behaviors Identified as Characteristic of Categories of Males

Percentage Agreement		Category	Percentage Agreement		Category
Female Raters	Male Raters	Behaviors	Female Raters	Male Raters	Traits
		Family Man			**Family Man**
100	96	read a bedtime story to his children.	94	100	Supportive
100	94	put the toy together.	92	94	Loyal
96	96	helped the kids with their homework.	86	98	Understanding
96	94	moved from the city so the children would have a yard.	90	94	Considerate
			86	96	Warm
96	94	fixed his son's bicycle.	88	94	Sensitive
90	92	played touch football with his son.	92	90	Appreciative
90	90	was faithful to his wife.	82	96	Caring
90	88	played catch with the kids.	80	94	Kind
88	80	told his daughter she looked pretty in the dress.	82	90	Concerned
86	76	started a college fund for each of his children.			
		Businessman			**Businessman**
100	98	bought the Wall Street Journal.	98	96	Businesslike
98	98	took a report along on vacation.	84	92	Ambitious
98	98	formed a subcommittee to work on the plan.	90	84	Punctual
98	92	called his stockbroker.	76	86	Organized
96	90	did not want to be interrupted while working.	76	82	Serious
100	84	stayed late at the office.	78	78	Logical
92	88	asked his secretary to get a birthday gift for his wife.	72	80	Persuasive
			74	78	Productive
88	88	read the political commentary.	66	80	Well-dressed
80	90	reminded his wife to check his appointment book before making dinner plans.	74	72	Convincing
84	82	bought a three piece suit.			
		Macho			**Macho**
96	90	boldly made eye contact with the girl.	98	100	Flirt
98	88	looked over all the women first.	96	90	Rough
98	86	was proud of his muscles.	88	94	Rugged
98	86	approached the new girl.	88	90	Tough
96	86	flirted with the clerk.	92	86	Immature
90	88	got into a chug-a-lug contest at the party.	94	80	Boisterous
96	82	knew that women found him attractive.	80	72	Adventuresome
86	80	went out with the boys on Saturday night.	80	90	Daring
84	80	worked out at the gym.	86	80	Bold
84	80	planned to go drinking at the local bar.	74	78	Impulsive
		Equally for all Males			**Equally for all Males**
84	80	turned on the light switch.			
76	84	took a shower.	66	--*	Clean
76	66	took out the shaving cream to shave.	54	--*	Proud
76	58	tipped the waitress.	52	--*	Positive
60	58	talked on the telephone.	52	--*	Capable
60	56	looked through the mail.			
60	54	went to the barbershop.			
50	56	watched the football game on TV.			
54	52	ate a sandwich for lunch.			
--*	62	drank a cup of coffee.			

*Behaviors with less than 50% agreement ratings by males or females are not listed.

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